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Reply to commentary by Kevin McDonald

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We thank Kevin McDonald for bringing the 'living science' concept propagated by Sociopedia into practice. We appreciate to take the opportunity to respond to a number of remarks made by him. We would like to take issue to 1) the notion of 'protest' versus 'action'; 2) the history of the concept 'identity' in contentious politics; and 3) adequacy of the toolboxes of social psychology to study contemporary protest.

Protest versus Action

McDonald is absolutely right in his observation that action cannot be reduced to protest. Despite the fact that protest became *the* modal way to express grievances and/or indignation (Meyer & Tarrow 1998, Norris et al 2005), contentious action is indeed much broader than protest. Be it petitioning, striking, lobbying, or more contemporary tactics as hacktivism, flash mobs, or silent marches people have a rich action repertoire to their disposal to express grievances and indignation. Is this important? We believe it is, because motivational dynamics vary considerably from tactic to tactic (Klandermans and Oegema 1987), event to event (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2011), and from organization to organization (Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans and Van Dijk 2009). Hence, different forms of protest entail different costs and benefits and consequently different motivational dynamics; as such the forms of protest affect the social psychological correlates of (non) participation.

History of Identity

Identity is key in explaining protest participation; it is hard to believe this has not always been the case. We have, however, a somewhat different reading of the paradigmatic development than McDonald. U.S. based explanations of the rise of the 1960s movements proposed resources and political processes as key to the ebb and flow of movements. In Europe at the same time, new social movement approaches figured centre stage in which identity played a pivotal role. It was Melucci who in 1984 placed Identity on the transatlantic agenda during a workshop on social movements in Amsterdam. The edited volume of Klandermans, Kriesi and Tarrow(1988) resulting from this workshop contained a chapter by Melucci on identity and movements which helped to migrate the concept of identity to the U.S. to be adopted and elaborated by U.S. scholars as Taylor, Whittier, Gamson and Snow.

Heading for the future

But the times they are a changing, be it by the networked liquid society or the Internet. Changes like these impact one way or the other on why and how people protest. McDonald wonders how far the identity concept brings us in a liquid Baumanian society. Indeed, formal embeddedness has always been a strong predictor of protest participation, supplemented by informal embeddedness and nowadays virtual embeddedness. How identification 'works' in these more liquid arenas is a fascinating empirical question indeed. McDonald also wonders how adequate the term 'protest' is as a tool to allow us to meaningfully design research agendas to cope with this changing reality. Changes in the socio-political context and contentious performances indeed question the very concept of 'protest'. Is a giant puppy show entertainment or is it political protest, is a climate change manifestation a music festival or a contentious event? Those questions are also waiting for empirical answers. Steve Wright's (1990) definition of *collective action participation* is a good start, i.e. individuals engage in collective action any time that they are acting as a representative of the group

and the action is directed at improving the conditions of the entire group. Important though, protest participation is political behavior, *unconventional political behavior* to be more precise. What do participants, politicians, bystanders, and the general public think? Are these 'old' and 'new' actions unconventional political behavior? Is this entertainment a contemporary selective incentive to bring people to the streets? Is it protest? All these changes seem to question basic aspects of protest behavior, be it meaning giving, consciousness or identity work. In other words, seem to question how socio-political context influences individual's political behavior and this is precisely the core of the social psychology of protest. We therefore believe that social psychology is well suited to study contemporary contentious performances.

In closing we want to share one observation related to the so-called French School. This school around scholars as Touraine and Melucci defined the rise of contention in the 1960s as new social movements in reaction to modernization. Although new social movements featured abundantly in the international literature of those days, work of French scholars was nearly absent, a situation which continues until these days. This is unfortunate, because precisely French social movement scholars continued to have identity, meaning and consciousness high on their research agendas at a time that such concepts are low on the research agendas of psychologists (except for identity). Perhaps more important, French scholarly work is often focused on *processes* and *dynamics* underlying the social psychology of protest. Bringing dynamics into the mainly correlational static designs is arguably the biggest challenge for 'international' social psychological approaches to protest. We therefore wholeheartedly invite scholars from the French School to cross the language divide and contribute to this discussion.

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